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Independent Labour Party (Great Britain)

The twenty-third conference of the Labour...

[London]

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**WEEKLY NOTES FOR SPEAKERS.**

**Supplement to No. 213, June 28th, 1923**

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# Independent Labour Party Information Committee,

*5, York Buildings, Adelphi, London, W.C. 2.*

**These Notes are issued for the use of delegates to the recent Labour Party Annual Conference in the hope that they will be found of service in the preparation of reports. They also serve as an introduction to our "Weekly Notes for Speakers." We enclose a copy of this week's number "The Air Menace" together with leaflet containing full particulars of subscriptions, etc.**

## THE TWENTY-THIRD CONFERENCE OF THE LABOUR PARTY

*QUEEN'S HALL, June 26-29, 1923*

### 1. The Party's Rise and Progress

Max Beer's History of British Socialism Vol. II p. 320/1

The Labour Representation Committee (afterwards the Labour Party) was formed on Feb. 27th and 28th, 1900, by 120 delegates in London, under the chairmanship of the late W. C. Steadman. J. Ramsay MacDonald, now Leader of the Opposition, was elected its first Secretary. It started with a membership of 375,931 Trade Unionists and Socialists. *Labour Party Annual Report*, 1922-3, as presented to the Conference, showed present membership as follows:—

108 Trade Unions, with 3,278,476 members.
* 547 Trades Councils and Local Labour Parties.
5 Socialist societies, with 31,760 members.

* NOTE. The Labour Party only accepts affiliation from one Labour Party in every constituency, and these figures do not therefore give an adequate representation of the full strength of the Labour Party locally. The National Agent's Report says: "There are now 2,653 divisional and local labour parties and trades councils throughout the country, showing an increase of 253 during the past year." There are also 1,031 Women's Sections with 120,000 members.

Annual Report p. 45

p. 43/44

*Finances.* Total income during the year, £31,721 13s. 6½d. Total expenditure, £70,782 17s. 2½d. Expenditure exceeded receipts by £19,061, 3s. 8d., and reduced the balance with which the year began from £23,033 3s. 6d. to £3,971 19s. 10d. This was due to (1) Falling off of affiliation fees owing to unemployment, and (2) Grant of £12,500 to *Daily Herald* and abnormal General Election expenses.

**RISING TO POWER**

| *General Election.* | | *M.P.'s Elected.* | | *Labour Vote.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1900 | ... | 2 | ... | 62,698 |
| 1906 | ... | 29 | ... | 323,195 |
| p 53 1910 (Jan.) | ... | 40 | ... | 505,690 |
| 1910 (Dec.) | ... | 42 | ... | 370,802 |
| 1918 | ... | 57 | ... | 2,244,945 |
| 1922 | ... | 142 | ... | 4,235,457 |

## 2. Important Policy Points in Annual Report

(a) *International Re-Construction.* New International constituted Hamburg, May, 1923, representing 30 countries. 462 delegates were present from 43 parties or groups. London decided as seat of the Secretariat. Tom Shaw and Frederick Adler (Austria) Joint Secretaries. London Administrative Committee p. 2 set up, consisting of the Secretaries, H. Gosling, J. Ramsay MacDonald, J. H. Thomas, A. Henderson, Sidney Webb, Clifford Allen, R. C. Wallhead.

(b) *Communist Affiliation to Labour Party.* It was reported that a renewed application for affiliation had been received from p 85 the Communist Party. The Executive had replied that the application could not be entertained, and asked Conference to endorse decision.

*Barrow Labour Party* moved as amendment acceptance of Communist Party.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| For affiliation | ..... | 366,000 |
| Against ,, | ..... | 2,880,000 |

## 3. Eligibility of Delegates

The Labour Party Constitution as it stood when the Conference met provided:—

(a) That every delegate should individually accept the Constitution of the Party, (b) That no person should be a delegate who was a member of an organisation responsible for running candidates not endorsed or approved by the Labour Party.

The Executive reported that (b) was very difficult to carry out and recommended its deletion while retaining (a). The Executive amendment was carried by a large majority.

## 4. Parliamentary Report

Points raised on the Parliamentary Report were:—

(a) Question of issuing whips to Mr. Newbold, M.P. Rejected by 2,227,000 votes to 219,000.

(b) Candidates who had rejected the Capital Levy at the General Election. Executive replied that cases brought to their attention had been dealt with.

Other points: Unemployment; Ex-Service questions; Lady Astor dinners.

## 5. Suspended M.P.'s

Some delegates desired to raise the question of the suspension of the four Scottish M.P.'.s The Arrangements Committee however reported against a resolution being moved, and proposed that Mr. MacDonald should make a statement. This course was adopted and Mr. MacDonald asked the Conference to pass to next business and "leave the Parliamentary Party to deal with the matter." Next business was carried by 2,840,000 votes to 430,000 whereupon Mr. Maxton stated that he and his colleagues had no desire to carry quarrels into the public arena and that any question of discipline they were prepared to leave absolutely in the hands of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

## 6. Resolutions

*Air Forces.* Resolution moved by George Lansbury, M.P. declared that "increase of British Air Force in competition with France is a preface to a new era of war," and called upon the Parliamentary Labour Party to offer every resistance. Carried unanimously.

*Foreign Policy.* Resolution moved by Ramsay MacDonald (a) welcoming reconstructed International, (b) protesting against Ruhr occupation, (c) calling for negotiations based on German offer, (d) complete recognition of Russian Government, was carried unanimously. Rhys Davies, M.P., and E. D. Morel supported.

*Disarmament.* I.L.P. resolution moved by W. H. Ayles calling upon the British Government to summon an International Conference and to take the initiative thereat in making a definite proposal to the other nations for immediate Universal Disarmament by mutual agreement, carried unanimously.

*Naval and Military Credits.* I.L.P. resolution affirmed that Parliamentary Party's policy should be to vote against all military and naval credits. Supporters: J. H. Hudson, John Scurr, Major Attlee, George Buchanan argued (a) that voting against credits was the logical sequence of previous resolutions, (b) that to vote for armaments was to stultify our peace propaganda, (c) that to vote against naval and military credits would be a moral gesture which would have important and beneficial effects on the prospects of world disarmament, (d) that total disarmament was the only practical method of defence.

The arguments against were (a) resolution would place Parliamentary Labour Party in an impossible position (Sidney Webb), (b) Great Britain could not disarm until other nations did the same (Jack Jones), (c) Too much unemployment at present—armaments must be built but not used (J. T. Brownlie), (d) If France continued present attitude defence could not be ignored—not practical politics to tell world that Labour in power would scrap Army, Navy and Air Force (Arthur Henderson).

On a card vote the resolution was defeated by 2,924,000 votes to 808,000.

*Capital Levy.* Executive Resolution re-affirming belief in capital levy. Carried with only a handful of dissentients.

*Workers' Compensation Act Amendment.* Miners' resolution to extend scope and increase amount, moved A. J. Cook, seconded J. H. Thomas, M.P., and carried unanimously.

*Unemployment.* Executive Resolution (J. R. Clynes mover) blaming Government because of its neglect of ameliorative measures, and for its foreign policy, and calling for measures of public utility, carried unanimously. Stepney resolution to allow affiliation of *National Unemployed Workers' Committee*, rejected.

*Education.* Composite resolution moved Morgan Jones, M.P., seconded John Hill and adopted. This resolution condemned large classes and decreased staffs, limitation of school feeding, reduction secondary school free places, suspension University scholarships, wage reductions, unjust superannuation reductions, etc.

I.L.P. carried an addendum (J. H. Hudson moving) calling on teachers to stamp out of the school curriculum a false historical instruction and military training.

*Land.* Wandsworth Labour Party was responsible for socialisation of land resolution. The method proposed was that Government should issue a declaration of common Right to Land, introduce a Bill calling upon landholders to pay to a Common Land Rent Fund the economic rent of their land, and provide for the allocation of the Common Rent Fund to local authorities for

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administrative purposes. Ramsay MacDonald resisted resolution on the ground that two Committees were already preparing reports whereupon the whole matter was remitted to the Executive.

*Merchant Shipping.* Three resolutions put forward by Marine Workers' Union were carried. They asked for legislation (1) on the findings of the Merchant Shipping Advisory Committee regarding saving life at sea, (2) providing that seamen being put to shore by reason of sickness should be paid their wages to the home port and (3) protesting against the employment of Chinese and cheap Asiatic labour in the manning of British ships.

*The Royal Family.* Stockton and Thornaby Labour Party desired the Party to declare that the Royal Family was no longer a necessary part of the British constitution. George Lansbury urged on behalf of the Executive that it was a question of no importance, and previous question was carried.

*Democratisation of Army.* S.D.F. asked Conference to declare in favour of democratised force for defensive purposes. W. H. Ayles (I.L.P.) opposed on the grounds it meant conscription, and the motion was previous questioned.

*Socialism the Object of the Labour Party.* John Scurr moved on behalf of the I.L.P. a resolution asserting that the supreme object of the Labour Party should be the supercession of Capitalism by the Socialist Commonwealth. The resolution was carried unanimously.

*Workers Control.* The I.L.P. resolution definitely instructing the Parliamentary Party to introduce Bills providing for introduction of the principle of workers' control in state and municipal services, was carried unanimously.

*Other Resolutions adopted.* Regional conferences for Labour representatives on local authorities—abolition of three days' waiting period—Trade Union representation in Labour Exchange administration—Ex-Service Pension reform—Reform of Parliamentary procedure—Rating Reform—Pure Milk Supply—Emigration Protest—Abolition of Poor Law Relief disqualifications for membership of local authority—Trade Boards, etc.

NEW EXECUTIVE. *National Organisation Section.* J. R. Clynes 2,612, Frank Hodges 2,497, F. W. Jowett 2,388, C. T. Cramp 2,361, A. C. Cameron 2,246, Sidney Webb 2,199, F. O. Roberts 2,164, W. Adamson 1,760, Jack Jones 1,737, Robert Williams 1,617, W. H. Hutchinson 1,593, Edward Dubury 1,507, W. R. Smith 1,458.

*Local Constituency Section.* Elected—George Lansbury 2,012, R. J. Davies 1,454, W. Lawther 1,367, H. Morrison 1,321, Mardy Jones 1,106.

*Women Members.* Elected—Susan Lawrence 2,370, Mrs. Harrison Bell 2,211, Dr. Ethel Bentham 2,211, Mrs. Agnes Dollan 1,848.

At the first meeting of the new Executive Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was elected as chairman for the ensuing year and Mr. C. T. Cramp as vice-chairman.

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# INFORMATION COMMITTEE

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5 YORK BUILDINGS
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LONDON, W.C.2

9th June 1923.

Dear Comrade,

Has your Branch yet been introduced to the work of the I.L.P. Information Committee? If not, may we trespass on your kindness to the extent of asking that this letter be read to your next meeting?

SUMMER PROPAGANDA. Open air work is just beginning and the great need of all Branches is not only good speakers, BUT GOOD SPEAKERS WITH GOOD MATERIAL. If you will find the speakers, the I.L.P. Information Committee will do its best to supply facts and figures and telling illustrations.

Enclosed is a copy of our WEEKLY NOTES FOR SPEAKERS, which are supplied to Branches on the following terms:-

One copy per week, 10/- per annum (post free).
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THE STORY OF THE I.L.P. Thousands of new members are flocking into the Party. If they are to be good members - true members, every one of them should know the history of their party and for this purpose MR RAMSAY MACDONALD has written "THE STORY OF THE I.L.P. AND WHAT IT STANDS FOR". It should be in the hands of every member and every enquirer. Send us an early order. You will find this latest publication excellent for making members and keeping members.

Yours sincerely,

ERNEST E. HUNTER,

Secretary.

P.S. If your Branch is already receiving the Speakers' Notes it can still consider the question of our other publications and especially our Voting Record offer, particulars of which are enclosed.

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